BC College & Institute Student Outcomes

2001 Highlights

Each year, thousands of students complete their educational programs at British Columbia's public colleges, university colleges, and institutes. These institutions, recognising that student feedback is important to maintaining high-quality, relevant post-secondary education, collect information through an annual province-wide survey of former students.

Former students are contacted by telephone 9–20 months after they have completed all, or a significant portion, of their program. Respondents are asked if they were satisfied with the education they received and their experiences at the institution. They are also asked about their employment status and any further studies they have taken.

This document highlights the findings from the College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey conducted in the spring of 2001. With the addition of the Institute for Indigenous Government, all 22 of BC's publicly funded colleges, university colleges, and institutes participated in the survey. The results are based on responses from over 18,000 former students.

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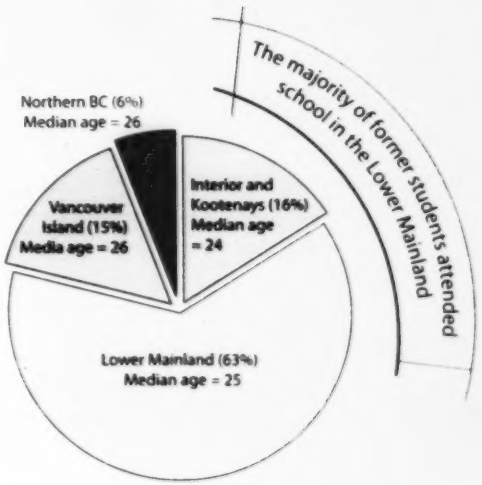
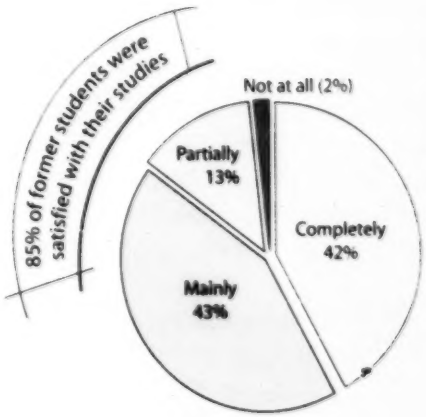
Who were the former students surveyed?

More than half of the former students surveyed were female: 53 percent overall. At the time of the survey, the median age of respondents was 25. Respondents who attended school in the Interior and Kootenays tended to be younger, with a median age of 24.


The majority of former students attended school in the Lower Mainland
Northern BC (6%)
Median age = 26
Vancouver Island (15%)
Media age = 26
Interior and Kootenays (16%)
Median age = 24
Lower Mainland (63%)
Median age = 25

Were former students satisfied with their studies?



As in previous years, a large majority of former students were satisfied with their studies. In all age groups, females tended to be slightly more satisfied than males, and respondents 30 years and older were somewhat more satisfied with their studies than those under 30 years.

OWG Outcomes Working Group

British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education

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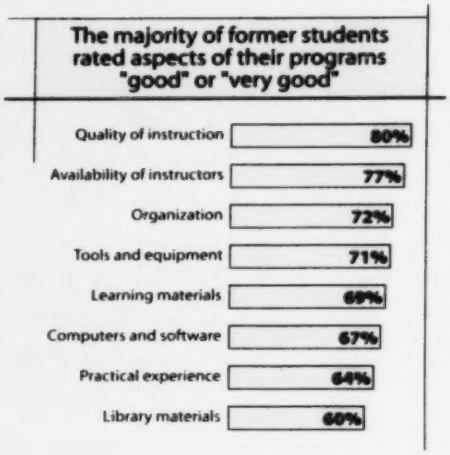
How did former students rate programs and services?



On the whole, former students assessed their programs favourably. The quality of instruction was highly rated, as was the availability of instructors outside of class. A substantial majority of respondents were positive about the quality of tools and equipment (other than computers), and the programs were thought to be well organized. Least positively rated were library materials and the amount of practical experience offered.

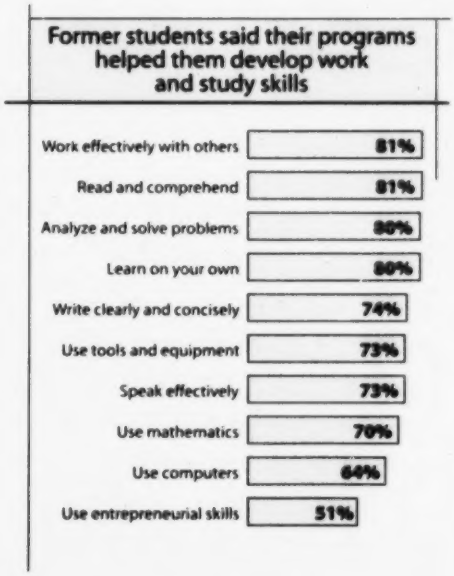
Institutional services and facilities were also evaluated by former students. Among the items evaluated for the first time in 2001 were program advising, career and personal counselling, gymnasium and fitness facilities, availability of texts in the bookstore, and information located on institutions' websites—they were rated good or very good by the majority of respondents.

Of all 21 services and facilities evaluated, a climate free from harassment and discrimination, buildings, and safety at night received the highest ratings (90, 82 and 78 percent respectively), while parking and help in finding employment received the lowest ratings (42 and 49 percent).

How well did former students' programs help them develop skills?

Former students were asked to rate the extent to which their program provided them with the opportunity to develop a range of skills. Respondents were most positive about developing skills related to working effectively with others and reading and comprehending. The skill development opportunities rated least favourably were the use of computers and entrepreneurial skills.

With regard to how well their program helped them develop communication skills, former students evidently felt better prepared for reading than for speaking effectively or writing clearly.



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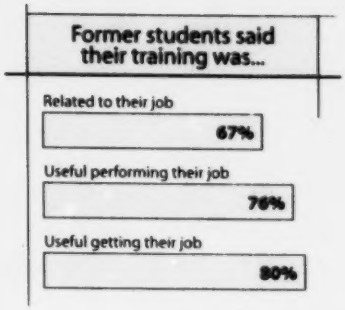
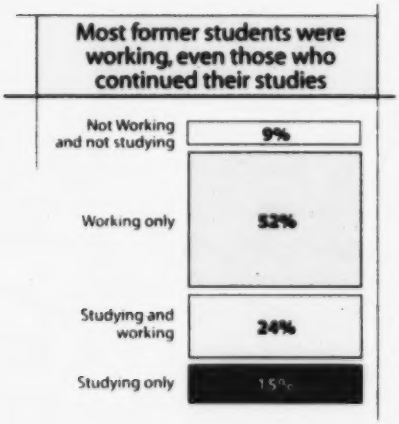
Most former students who went on to further studies felt they had been prepared by their initial program; in fact, 92 percent said that they were well or very well prepared. A majority of employed former students said that their work was related to their training and that their education helped them perform their job.



Did former students get the courses they wanted?

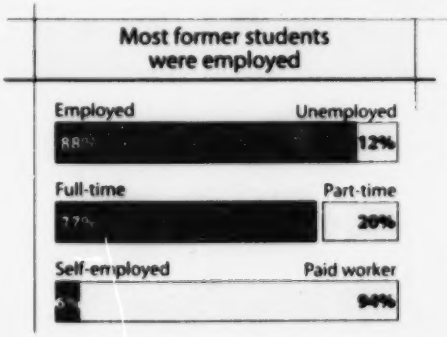
When they first enrolled at their institutions, most former students (93 percent) were accepted into their preferred program of study; the results were similar for all program areas. Nevertheless, almost one in seven former students (13 percent) reported they were unable to enrol in all the courses they needed. Course access was more challenging in the arts and sciences: 28 percent of respondents were unable to enrol in all of their courses (the average for all other program areas was 7 percent). Furthermore, a total of 13 percent of arts and sciences students were unable to enrol in three or more needed courses throughout their program of study.

What are former students doing now?



Almost 50 percent of former students who were surveyed had taken further studies at some time since leaving their initial program. A higher percentage of former arts and sciences students pursued additional studies—76 percent had taken further education. At the time of the survey, 67 percent of former arts and sciences students were studying, compared to an average of 27 percent for students in other program areas.

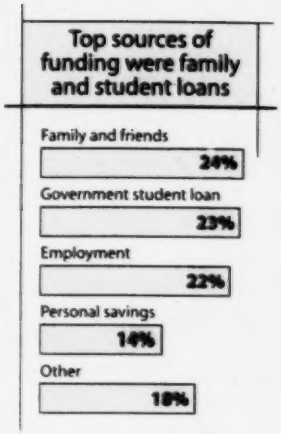
Most former students surveyed were participating in the labour market, that is, employed or looking for work. Of those in the labour market, 88 percent were employed—two-thirds worked full-time. Of respondents who were employed, 6 percent reported self-employment.

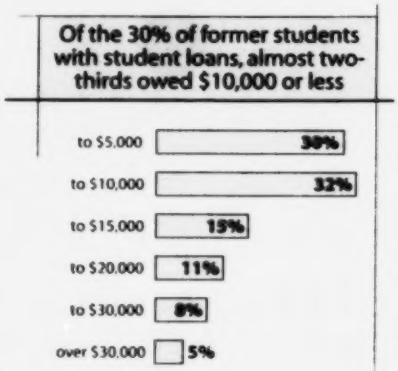


The median monthly salary of respondents employed full-time (at their main job, if they had more than one) was $2600.

How did former students pay for their education?

Money from family and friends was identified as the top source of education funding for almost one-quarter of the former students surveyed. Another 23 percent said that a government student loan was their top source. Of those who relied most on their student loan, they said it covered 70 percent of their funding needs.





Of the former students who applied for government student assistance (35 percent of respondents), 85 percent received a student loan, while 61 percent received a grant. For those with government student loan debt (30 percent of respondents), the median amount borrowed was $8,350.

At the time of the survey, 61 percent of respondents with student loans had started repaying them. Of those former students, 29 percent said they were experiencing difficulty with repayments. They tried a number of solutions to this difficulty: 35 percent said they were receiving interest relief, 12 percent were working more, 9 percent extended their repayment period, and 8 percent just stopped making payments.

About the College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey

The BC College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey has been conducted since 1988. The number of students who respond to the survey varies year to year, but the average response rate is 68 percent. The college and institute student outcomes database now contains seven years of data and over 130,000 respondent records.

The survey results are used by colleges, university colleges, and institutes—often through the Student Outcomes Reporting System (SORS), a web-based tool—to evaluate and improve programs and services. The Ministry of Advanced Education uses the information for policy evaluation and planning. Students, parents, and the general public can view students' outcomes through ***Opening Doors*** (http://www.openingdoorsbc.com/) to help them make informed post-secondary education choices.

The British Columbia Outcomes Working Group (OWG) oversees the former student survey. The OWG is a long-standing partnership among colleges, university colleges, institutes, and a number of system-wide bodies, including the Ministry, the Standing Committee on Evaluation and Accountability, and the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer.

For more information on BC student outcomes, go to http://outcomes.ceiss.org/ or contact:
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The BC College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey is conducted with funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education and BC's public colleges, university colleges, and institutes.